

A Bishop Resigns to Save His Faith

The Right Rev. F. J. Kinsman's Dramatic Protest Against Modern "Tolerance" in Protestant Episcopal Church

HAVING renounced the highest honors his church could bestow, the Right Rev. Frederick J. Kinsman, Bishop of the Protestant Episcopal Diocese of Delaware, is living the life of a recluse by the shore of a mountain pond in Maine. He spends his days in study and in preparation for the making over of his life.

Bishop Kinsman resigned because he felt the Episcopal Church was too tolerant of the present day aversion to the supernatural; that it failed to defend actively the essentials of the faith and that it did not attach sufficient significance to the sacraments.

Until the general convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church, which meets in Detroit in October, Bishop Kinsman can do nothing, for by the rules of the church he is still the Bishop and will remain so, despite his resignation, until formal action has been taken. At the general convention his letter of resignation will be read to the House of Bishops and he will be deposed formally from the ministry.

Because of his convictions he refuses to take any further part in the administrative affairs of his diocese or to assist in the "perpetuation of the ministry" he has disavowed.

"I have not decided what I shall do after the general convention," he said in response to a question. Then he added, "Not fully."

This was the only reply he would make to statements that he purposed entering the Roman Catholic priesthood. He was told that his letter of resignation had started a controversy within the Episcopal Church. He smiled wistfully and said:

"Then let the controversy rage without me. I receive many letters and clippings here expressing the opinions of the clergy. But as fast as I receive them I put them in my wastebasket. I want no part in the discussions. My letter of resignation speaks for itself. My mind is made up. I chose the only course, and until the meeting of the general convention I can only wait."

A Secluded Spot

The Bishop was seen at his home, Birchmere, Bryant Pond, Me. If he had chosen the spot for seclusion he could not have chosen more wisely. It is most difficult of access. There is an early morning train out of Portland and there is another at noon. But, on reaching Bryant Pond one finds himself cut off from the Bishop's retreat by the pond itself. There is no other way of reaching his home. A mountain storm was raging when the writer sought the Bishop. An old boatman refused to row across the pond, saying, "This lake has no bottom and the boat might overturn."

Finally he was prevailed upon to undertake the crossing. It is only a step to Birchmere, where the Bishop's father and mother keep house for him. "You will find the Bishop in the tent down there—wait, I'll call him," said his father. So he went into the house and brought out a dinner bell. The Bishop, surprised at the interruption, for it was not meal time, came hurrying down a mountain path, bearing in his hands a writing pad and a pencil.

There was nothing in his apparel to suggest the ecclesiastic. He was dressed in Palm Beach trousers, a striped shirt and a wash tie. His shoes were heavy and suitable for mountain byways.

Yet if there were nothing in his apparel to suggest the ecclesiastic there was much in his manner. Walter Besant was right. When once the reverse collar has been worn, when once the hands have been imposed in ordination, the clergyman is a man apart. And no operation of ecclesiastical machinery can ever efface the stamp. The Bishop, despite his disguise, was still the Bishop. His finger tips went together instinctively. His manner was the manner of the church.

Have you come all the way from New York to see me? he asked in surprise, as if he little realized that he was soon to be one of the greatest storm centers in church history in this country.

Unwilling to Talk

"There is nothing I can add to my letter now; nothing," he said quickly. Then he was told that his letter had been published only in part in New York and that his reasons for resigning his high station had not been made clear.

"I will give you a copy. You will see that there is nothing to be added. Some time after the general convention, I may have something to say; but not now." With this he turned into his house and brought the complete text, which is given elsewhere.

"Some say you are going to be America's Cardinal Newman," it was suggested.

"There is a good deal of speculation. But the people must wait. I wrote my letter to the presiding Bishop—Bishop Tuttle, you know—because he was in a hurry for it. My resignation was announced a long time ago, and it was necessary that he have a formal statement for the meeting of the bishops. There is nothing more to be done. My resignation must be

accepted. With it there will come the deposition from the ministry. All that is behind me."

"But about your leaving the church?"

"Please read the text of my letter. You will notice that I have not left the communion—only the ministry."

With this the Bishop turned to the scenery. The storm was increasing in fury. "I will get you a raincoat," he said.

He emerged a moment later with a long, ecclesiastical looking cape.

"It looks like Chelsea Square," it was suggested. (The Bishop before his consecration was a teacher at General Theological Seminary in Old Chelsea.) He fingered the cape reminiscently for a moment and said:

"Yes, this was the first cape to be worn there. It set the fashion."

On the way to the landing the Bishop was told that some of the clergy had said his changed convictions were the result of an illness. There was a little of the old fire for a moment, the fire that had made him so popular as a teacher in the seminary. "You can do this for me: You can tell every one you meet that you found me in the best of health. There is nothing wrong with my physical condition."

The Bishop's Parents

The Bishop's father and mother had overheard this. Their looks showed approval of what he said. There was something wistful in their attitude. There was something heroic. They had followed the career of their son closely. When he was chosen Bishop of Delaware they had gone to share with him the honors of the episcopal residence. Now they were standing by while he was going through his trial. There was nothing regretful in their attitude. They seemed to say, though silently, that what he was doing was right because he was doing it. It may be that they do not follow his reasoning all the way. But they do not doubt his sincerity, and they will not make his burdens any more difficult to bear by vain questionings.

At the boat the Bishop said: "After the general convention I will give another statement. I can't say just when. You can reach me here at any time." He paused a moment and looked around. "This is my only home now." Behind him were the associations of historic Delaware—the Old Swede Church and the "warm-hearted people for whom, during eleven years, I have come to have an ever-deepening affection." Before him was deposition from the ministry, a storm of controversy, from which even the seclusion of his tent could not shield him, and—well, not even he can answer that yet.

He looked up toward his home and said again: "This is my only home now."

"Goodbye!" he called, and he went for a hasty word with his parents and then betook himself to his tent, where he writes and reads all day, except when he is exercising or at meals.

The Bishop is only fifty years old. His appearance gives support to his statement that he is in the best of health. There is nothing of the ascetic about him. Yet his life has been very much cloistered. He was born in Warren, Ohio, and received his preliminary education at St. Paul's School, Concord, N. H. Later he returned to this school as head master. This was immediately after his return from Keble College, Oxford University, England. Later he went to Berkeley Divinity School, Middletown, Conn., as professor of ecclesiastical history. In 1903 he was called to a similar chair in General Theological Seminary, from which he was called to the Delaware Diocese.

The Life of a Scholar

At the seminary he was much beloved, because he was so patient with students, and yet so forceful. His lectures were never evaded. He would help the seminarians over the rough places, and show the utmost consideration for them in their intellectual difficulties. Outside of the teaching hours he was much alone. His life has been that of the scholar, and it was a great surprise to many when he was elected to the episcopacy.

His own intellectual difficulties are not of recent origin, despite the statements of critics that they have been brought on by illness. In his letter of resignation he speaks of his reinvestigations of the subject of holy orders, which have covered a period of three years.

As long ago as last Advent he declined to ordain candidates for the ministry from New York and Pennsylvania, and he says in his letter of withdrawal, "at which time I also finally decided to resign my diocese."

He sums up his reasons for withdrawing under three heads:

1. Creeds.
 2. Sacraments.
 3. Orders.
- Under the heading of "Creeds" he says: "Attacks on creeds in general and on specific doctrines are common; they are tolerated, sometimes encouraged, by those in authority; they are made by those officially appointed to teach creeds and defend them."
- He speaks of the Episcopal Church

His Letter of Resignation

To the Right Rev. Daniel Sylvester Tuttle, D.D., D.C., LL.D., Presiding Bishop of the Protestant Episcopal Church.

My Dear Presiding Bishop:

I hereby present through you to the House of Bishops the resignation of my jurisdiction as Bishop of the Diocese of Delaware.

I take this step with utmost regret, both as relinquishing a post assigned me by the Church to which I owe the greatest blessings of my life, and as severing my connection with the State of Delaware and its warm-hearted people, for whom, during eleven years, I have come to have an ever-deepening affection. The only post I could wish for myself is that of Bishop of Delaware. I resign it because I can no longer hold any post of authority in the Protestant Episcopal Church. Fuller experience which has come to me as Bishop and more thorough study of the history of our communion have forced me to abandon the interpretation of the Church's position which I held at the time of my consecration; and I can adopt no other which would warrant my continuance in office.

The view of the Church's position which I have held, certainly the prevailing view in the House of Bishops, is simply that the Episcopal Church, strong in its "appeal to antiquity," stands firmly for the doctrine of the Incarnation as contained in the Scriptures and the creeds, and, by emphasis on its sacramental character, perpetuates the life of the Catholic Church. But I have ceased to believe—and here I part company with the bishops and contradict my convictions and teaching in past years—that the actual facts bear out this contention.

In spite of the greatest unwillingness, I have come to feel that the interpretation of the Anglican position which connects it chiefly with the Protestant Reformation is the one more consistent with its history viewed as a whole; and that its dominant tendencies are increasingly identified with these currents of thought and development which are making away from the definiteness of the ancient faith toward Unitarian vagueness. This would seem to me to be due not merely to local or temporary conditions, but to certain informing principles always more or less apparent in Anglican history. To preserve balance and proportion of the truth, the Episcopal churches have aimed at comprehension by compromise. I have come to believe that this habit of compromise involves increasing surrenders of truth in spite of religious revivals aiming at stronger insistence on the ancient faith.

The chief causes of difficulty for me have been three:

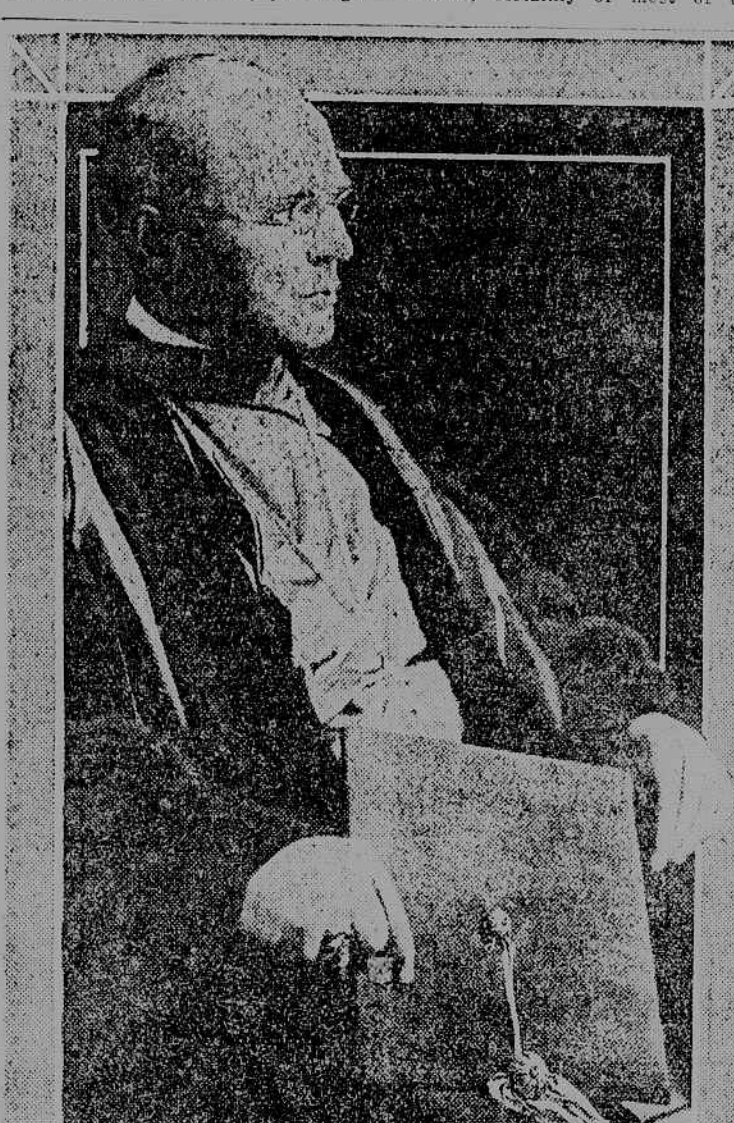
- (1) Tolerance of denials of faith seeming to indicate failure to defend the Church's doctrine.
- (2) Tolerance of imperfect views of sacraments, seeming to result in failure rightly to use them.
- (3) A theory of orders which seems to nullify them.

1.—Creeds. It is unquestionable that the Anglican communion is officially committed to the doctrines of the Scriptures and the creeds. Authoritative declarations have always asserted this, and would do so now. But custom seems to nullify

acceptance of the "doctrine of the virgin birth of our Lord as recorded in St. Luke's gospel," and adds: "Denials of this doctrine have become common

this theoretical position. *Consuetudo est optima legis interpres.* Attacks on creeds in general and on specific doctrines are common; they are tolerated, sometimes encouraged, by those in authority; they are made by those officially appointed to teach creeds and defend them.

For example, the Episcopal Church accepts without question the doctrine of the virgin birth of our Lord as recorded in St. Luke's Gospel. The clergy, bound by oath "with all faithful diligence to banish and drive away from the Church all erroneous and strange doctrine," are theoretically bound to combat denials of the virgin birth in as resolute and businesslike way as the Bishop of Ohio did thirty years ago.



Bishop Frederick J. Kinsman

But is this now possible? Denials of this doctrine have become common—e.g., among eminent divines in the English universities and in the larger American dioceses. Even in some cases formally brought to the attention of bishops there has been no public condemnation.

2.—Sacraments. The Episcopal Church permits and encourages a variety of views about sacraments. Its standard, however, is determined by the minimum rather than the maximum view tolerated, since its official position must be gauged not by the most it allows, but by the least it insists on. Its general influence has fluid qualities always seeking the lowest possible level. The stream of its life cannot rise higher

than its source in corporate authority. Individual belief and practice may surmount this, but they will ultimately count for nothing so long as they find no expression in official action; nor can the Church be judged by the standard of individual members acting in independence of it.

3.—Orders. The immediate occasion of my resignation has been a change of view concerning Anglican ordinations. I received and have conferred orders in the Episcopal Church, believing holy orders to be a sacrament of divine appointment, necessary for valid ministrations. In this I simply shared the conviction of many English and American divines, certainly of most of the

theory attached." This contention, though lacking support from many whose judgment is of special weight, has that of many great names, of the preponderance of lay opinion and of important precedents. In comparing the arguments for *esse* and *bene esse* (the theory that the Church in ordination confers a sacrament, though many clergy do not know it, as contrasted with the other that the Church confers no sacrament, though some of the clergy think so) I have been forced to admit that the defenders of the latter seem to make out the stronger case, and that this must be taken as the more probable opinion of holy orders in the Anglican communion. I have yielded to the argument for this, but I give up the orders.

Consideration of this matter had created such grave doubts in my mind last December that I had to refuse requests from the bishops of New York and Pennsylvania to hold ordinations for them during Advent, at which time also I finally decided to resign my diocese. Only during the last month, however, have I been able to see what must be the further consequences for myself.

To my mind orders to which "no special theory is attached" are orders to which no special importance is attached. Orders of this description do have the theory attached that no special theory is necessary, which excludes the sacramental view. To the orders of the Catholic Church the theory is always attached, or, rather, in them the principle is inherent, that orders is a sacrament, perpetuating the apostolate instituted by our Lord. If the "no special theory" be the more correct one Anglican orders are proved dubious, if not invalid, through defect of intention. If so, I for one cannot perpetuate them, nor can I hold them.

"Is the creed worth defending?" "Are the sacraments divine mysteries?" "Is Holy Orders a sacrament?" I believe the only answer the Church should make to all of these questions to be a prompt and emphatic "Yes"; yet I have come to feel that our communion by its non-committal attitude virtually answers "No." Hence, I have no choice but to resign my place and to declare my withdrawal from the ministry; the bishops have no choice but to accept the resignation and proceed to my deposition, since resignation for these reasons involves renunciation at least of the discipline and orders of the Protestant Episcopal Church.

I ought not to regret doing what under the circumstance is necessary and right. I do sincerely regret that the action will cause pain to many and sever ties and associations which I supremely value. Though forced to give up the ministry of the Episcopal Church, I have not ceased to appreciate the depth and reality of its religious experience, or to believe that through it our Lord gives His grace to all who approach Him in good faith; nor have I ceased to recognize that it is a training school for saints and is making valuable contributions to American Christianity. My personal feelings for it can only be those of gratitude. To it alone I owe the convictions which have led to my present action.

With great respect and affection, sincerely yours,
FREDERICK JOSEPH KINSMAN.
Birchmere, Bryant Pond, Me., July 1, 1919.

bishops with whom I have had closest contact. Hesitation about the use of the word "sacrament" as applied to the orders, as not one of those "generally necessary," cannot obscure the sacramental character of the formula, "Receive the Holy Ghost for the office of a priest (or bishop) in the Church of God." In the best of company I have taken this as representing the true teaching of the Anglican communion about orders, though it involved explaining away dubiousness elsewhere in formularies and in practice.

During the last three years, however, I have been reinvestigating the question of orders, being largely influenced to do so by arguments that Anglican orders "have no special

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Now a Recluse in the Wilds of Maine, Preparing To Make His Life All Over Again

Bishop says: "The Episcopal Church permits and encourages a variety of views about sacraments. Its standard, however, is determined by the minimum rather than the maximum view tolerated, since its official position must be gauged not by the most it allows but by the least it insists upon. . . . On the whole, the Church seems to be swayed by the tendencies of the age opposed to the supernatural, owing to ambiguities inherent in its system always subject to an intellectual law of gravitation."

It is upon the subject of orders that the Bishop dwells at greatest length. This was to have been expected, since it is a subject so closely related to that which he taught for so many years at Berkeley and at General. He says, after telling that his reinvestigations have occupied three years, that he was largely influenced "by argument that Anglican orders had 'no special theory attached.' This contention, though lacking support from many whose judgment is of special weight, has that of many great names, of the preponderance of lay opinion and of important precedents. In comparing the arguments for *esse* and *bene esse* (the theory that the Church in ordination confers a sacrament, though many of the clergy do not know it, as contrasted with the other that the Church confers no sacrament, though some of the clergy think so), I have been forced to admit that the defenders of the latter seem to make out the stronger case, and that this must be taken as the more probable opinion of holy orders in the Anglican communion. I have yielded to the arguments for this, but I give up the orders. . . .

"To my mind, orders which have 'no special theory attached' are orders to which no special significance is attached."

The Bishop spoke of the letters and clippings that have reached him, but in his seclusion at Birchmere he little realizes the storm that is brewing. His letter already is the chief topic of controversy as the day of the general convention approaches. It overshadows even the expected pronouncement of a social programme for the Episcopal Church. It interrupts even the informal balloting for the bishopric of New York, which hitherto engaged the attention of the whole Church. Before it even the proposed concordat with the Congregationalists pales, and discussions of Church unity have been halted.

His letter strikes right at the heart of the Episcopal Church position. "The Living Church," organ of the High Church party in the Episcopal Church, had a stop-prest editorial, with a promise of exhaustive treatment later. "The Churchman," organ of the Low Church party, prints the letter of resignation without comment, under the heading "Bishop Kinsman's Apologia." Whether "The Churchman" would have an editorial on the subject "had not been decided yet" when inquiry was made.

"The Living Church" said: "The resignation of Bishop Kinsman must necessarily fill us and great numbers of others with pain, and no doubt has brought pain to him. We defer for the moment any examination of his new intellectual position, as therein avowed, though duty demands that careful examination of it be made, and we shall recur to it in the near future. For the present our sense of bereavement in his retirement from the communion of the American Church, our sorrow for the step which he deems it right to take, our feeling of sympathy for him in intellectual distress, overshadow our sense of the inconclusiveness of the reasons he has given. Strange is the human mind in its workings. If Bishop Kinsman's duty rightly calls him out of the communion of the Episcopal Church, it should call also all who hold to the catholicity of the Church; and if it does not rightly call those others, it cannot rightly call him. He has decided one way, alone; thousands have faced the same problem and decided the other way."

"So now we record our sadness at his determination. In suitable time we shall discuss his reasons, not for the sake of arguing with him, who has decided for himself, but so that we may show why a like decision must be rejected by the rest of us."

In the judgment of most of the clergy there is no refuge for Bishop Kinsman save in the Roman Catholic communion. His mental processes are declared to be very much like those of John Henry Newman, and there is a great deal of similarity in the written conclusions.

For many years he has been recognized as an authority on ecclesiastical history. Now that he has subscribed to the Roman Catholic theory—for his disavowal of his own orders is tantamount to that—it is likely that he would be accepted as a teacher in a Roman Catholic institution, pending his ordination to the priesthood. Despite his careful directing of attention

to the fact that he had not "left the Episcopal communion," his early entrance into the Roman Catholic Church is expected.

The form of deposition from the office of Bishop is expected to be determined by Bishop Daniel Sylvester Tuttle, presiding Bishop of the Protestant Episcopal Church. Because of the peculiar nature of the case it is expected that only such formal action will be taken as will comply with the letter of the canon law.

The Priests' Prayer Book, which is a guide for many High Church practices, although not sanctioned for use in this country by the general convention, contains a "Form of Degradation From Holy Orders." This is the only known form, except a mere compliance with canon law.

The first rubric says, "No deprivation of any person in holy orders shall take place save for grave errors in doctrine or practice which (if not confessed by the delinquent) must be duly proved by open trial in the church courts, and even after conviction in such courts be necessary in the case of any priest or deacon, and that of the provincial synod in case of any bishop, before degradation from holy orders can be proceeded with."

After a formal announcement of the purpose of the proceedings, a reading of the sentence, the singing of appropriate psalms and the reading of the appointed Scriptures and collects, the deponent, "dressed in his ecclesiastical garb," shall be caused to kneel before the Bishop seated in front of the altar, who, naming the deponent, shall say:

"Because thou hast violated God's law and profaned His holy things, hast put no difference between the holy and the profane, neither showed it between the clean and the unclean, so that God is profaned among us; know that thou shalt bear thine iniquity and not come near unto Him, nor come near unto any of His holy things in His holy place, but shalt bear thy shame and the abominations which thou hast committed."

"Hiring, Not Shepherd"

Another rubric says: "If the deponent be a bishop, then shall the pastoral staff be put into his hands and taken away from him again, the officiant saying: 'Because thou hast been an hireling, and not a shepherd; because the diseased hast thou not strengthened, neither hast thou healed that which was sick, neither hast thou bound up that which was broken, neither hast thou brought again that which was driven away, neither hast thou sought that which was lost, but hast ruled with force and with cruelty; therefore the Lord refuses His flock at thine hand, and causes thee to flee from feeding the flock, and we, in token thereof, take from thee the pastoral staff and the office of a bishop in this Church. In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost.'"

A later rubric notes that "the deponent shall be degraded successively from each office in the ministry to which he has attained, beginning with the highest."

In the case of a bishop, if this early form were followed, he would be deposed first as bishop, then as priest and finally as deacon. Then the officiant would say:

"Forasmuch as (naming him) is now deposed and thrust out from being a minister unto the Lord, we call upon you, brethren, to bear witness unto the fact and to keep yourselves and others from receiving any ministrations of the Church at his hands, lest ye be partakers of his evil deeds, but to have no company with him that he may be shamed."

"As we do now erase and blot out his name from the register of the clergy of this Church," here shall the Bishop draw a pen through the name of the deposed clerk on the roll presented to him by an official "in token that, if he repent not and amend, God will blot out his name from the Book of Life. Amen."

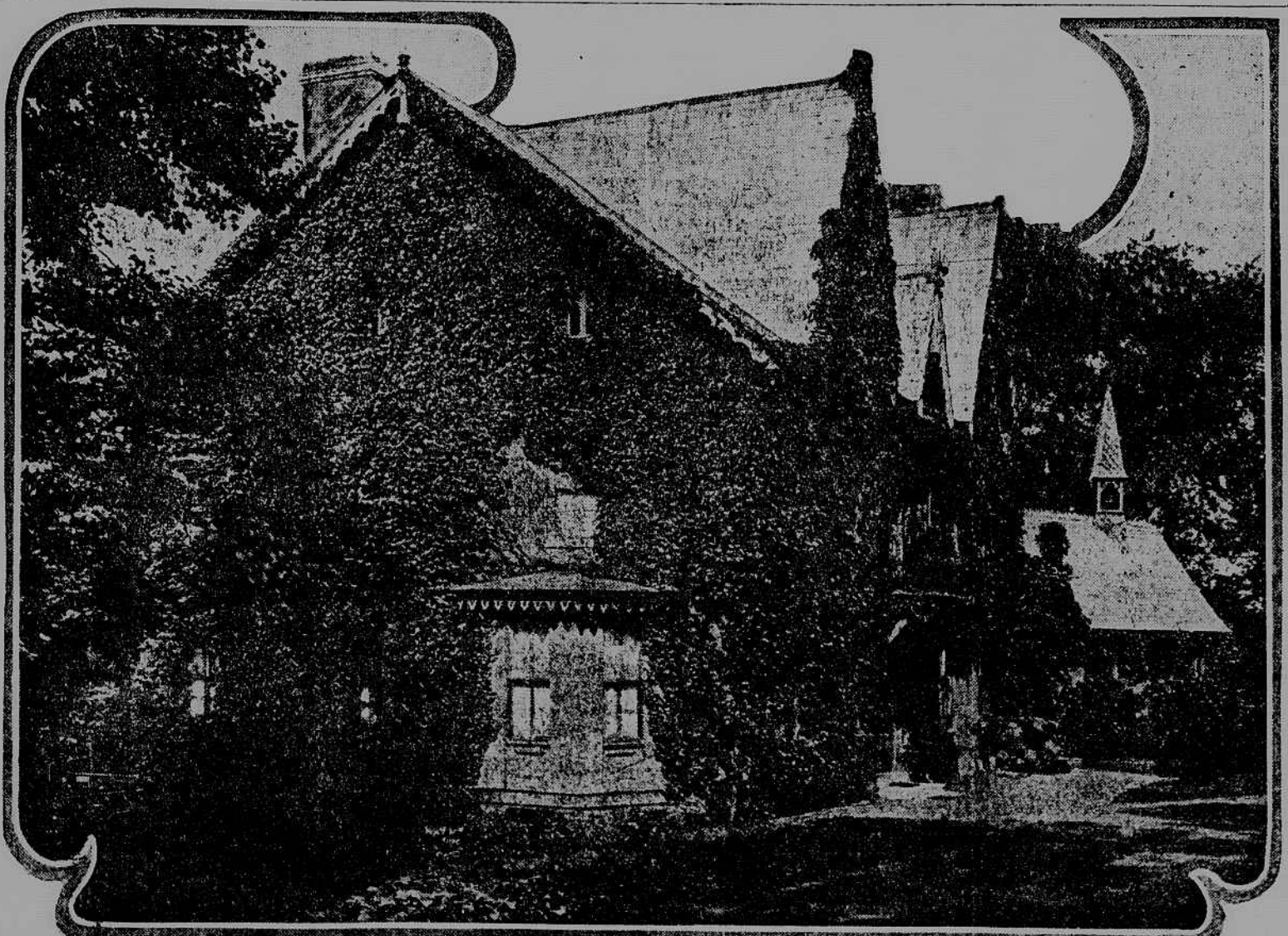
"But as God, Who hath taken this unfruitful branch away from His vine, is able to purge it, that it may bring forth much fruit and to graft it in again; let us pray to Him that He will of His great mercy vouchsafe conversion and amendment to our sinful brother, and restore him whole to the Church."

"Thou Hast Trespassed"

More prayers follow. Then: "At the close of the prayers, if the deposed clerk be present, he shall be conducted out of the church by two officials, the Bishop saying: 'Go out of the sanctuary, for thou hast trespassed.'"

It is inconceivable that Bishop Kinsman would permit the use of this service by lending his own presence, even if it were the will of the presiding Bishop to do so. By his own logic, as recorded in his letter of resignation, he would deny the authority of the Church so to degrade him in the deposition.

No moral obliquity attaches to his retirement from the office. It is the result merely of an intellectual conviction. But the old formula did not differentiate, and one who renounced the office merited the old condemnation.



Bishopstead, the Home of the Bishop of Delaware